REMARKS

In the Final Office Action dated April 9, 2001, the Examiner rejected claims 1-12 and 18-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Higdon et al.* ("*Higdon*") and rejected claims 13-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious in view of *Higdon* and *Upchurch.* Applicants traverse the rejections and request reconsideration.

I. THE REJECTION OF CLAIMS 1-12 AND 18-27 AS ANTICIPATED BY HIGDON

The Examiner rejected claims 1-12 and 18-27 as anticipated by *Higdon.* In particular, the Examiner opines that *Higdon* discloses a "'stream switching system...' for a chromatograph including a plurality of solenoid valves 98, a sheet heater (column 4, lines 57+), and an insulated hosing (Figure 3B, for example). Contrary to Applicants' remarks, the patent to *Higdon* et al clearly shows a common stream channel (single inlet/multiple outlet 72) valved by a particular solenoid 98. At least part of the tubing [is] pre-heated...by the sheet heater (column 4, lines 57+)(claims 1+). The solenoid actuated valves clearly 'vale' [sic] the '...input and output ports...between an open and closed position.' (claim 9). The reduced 'tubing size' shown in Figure 3A (claim 18) acts as a restrictor. With regard to claims 19 and 20, not the plurality of input and output ports (Figure 3A)."

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 9, and each claim dependent therefrom are in condition for allowance. Claim 1 has been amended to recite the restriction of sample flow to about 50-70 cc/min at 15 psig. This amendment finds support in the specification at page 16, line 20 of the specification.

Regarding claim 9, that claim recites more than simply input and output ports between an open and a closed position. As disclosed in the specification at p. 20, in the prior art there was a significant problem with stream handling systems during power failure. One inventive feature

disclosed in the application is the use of an alternative type of solenoid. These solenoids operate to allow the flow of actuation gas (*i.e.*, they are open) when power is absent. This forces the pistons into an upward position, resulting in closed ports. Conversely, in the disclosed embodiment they require an electrical impulse to shut off the actuation gas and to open the ports. Such an arrangement is markedly safer than that known in the prior art. Nowhere is such an improvement suggested in *Higdon*.

II. THE REJECTION OF CLAIMS 13-17 AS OBVIOUS IN VIEW OF HIGDON AND UPCHURCH

Claim 13 requires a filter upstream of the sample handling system and downstream of the sample point. As explained in the instant specification at p. 14, ll. 10-19, the placement of a filter as close as feasible to the sample point is advantageous. Yet even if Higdon and Upchurch were combined, there is no suggestion in either patent to place a filter at the recited location of claim 13 and claims dependent therefrom. Allowance of claim 13 is respectfully requested.

III. CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request allowance of all the claims. If the Examiner has any questions or wishes to expedite the prosecution of the case in any respect, he is invited to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Twice Amended) A stream switching system, comprising:

a stream switching housing having at least one common stream channel portion with a plurality of input ports and at least one output port;

tubing connected at least one of said output ports,

said tubing at least in part being a pre-heat coil suitable to heat a gas sample traveling through said coil and to act as a flow restrictor, the extent of said flow restriction sufficient to restrict said sample flow to about 50-70 cc/min at 15 psig.